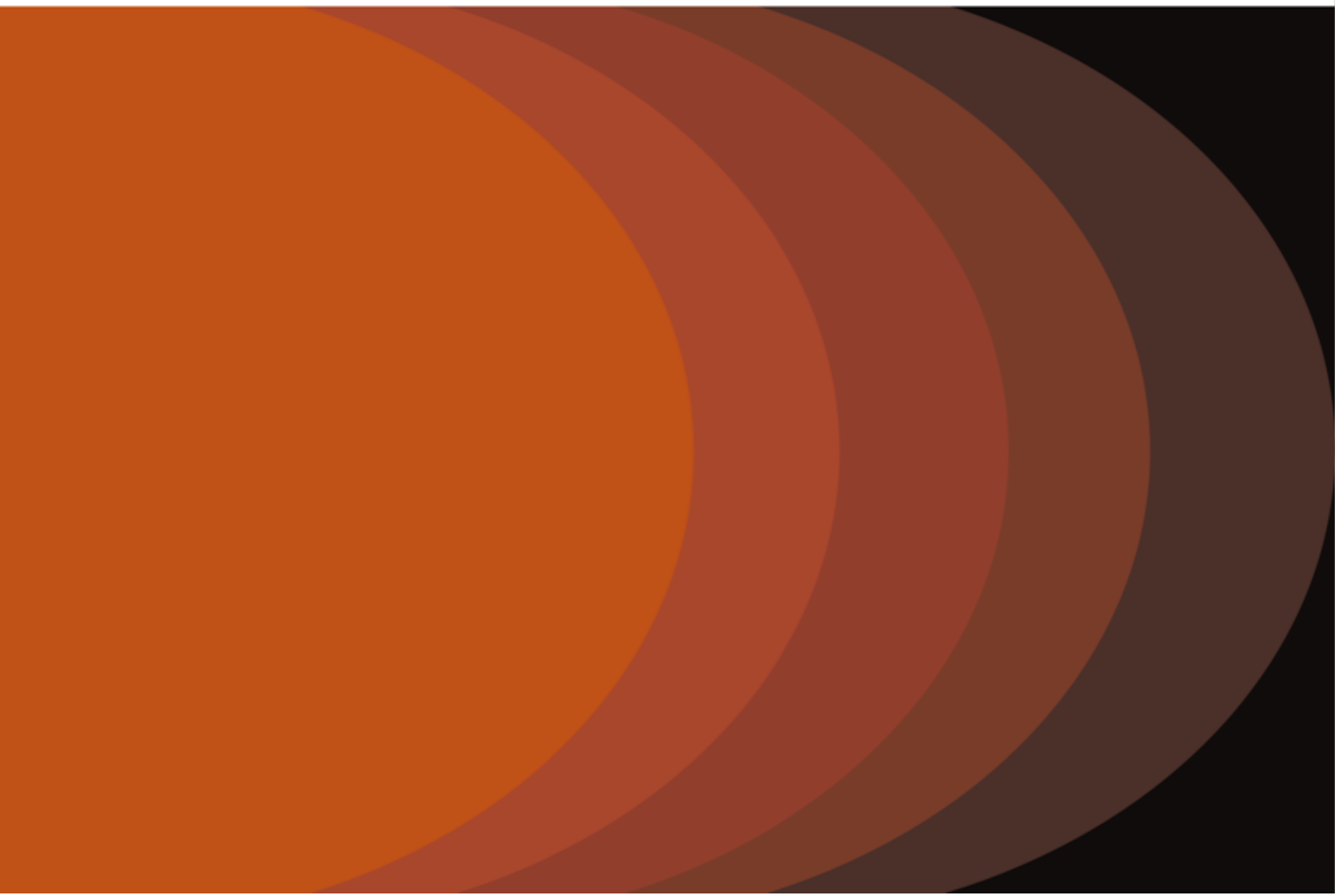




An inspection of youth offending services in
Wolverhampton

HM Inspectorate of Probation, February 2022



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Acknowledgements

This inspection was led by HM Inspector Pauline Burke, supported by a team of inspectors and colleagues from across the Inspectorate. We would like to thank all those who helped plan and took part in the inspection; without their help and cooperation, the inspection would not have been possible.

The role of HM Inspectorate of Probation

Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation is the independent inspector of youth offending and probation services in England and Wales. We report on the effectiveness of probation and youth offending service work with adults and children.

We inspect these services and publish inspection reports. We highlight good and poor practice and use our data and information to encourage high-quality services. We are independent of government and speak independently.

Please note that throughout the report the names in the practice examples have been changed to protect the individual's identity.

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This publication is available for download at: www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmiprobation

Published by:

HM Inspectorate of Probation
1st Floor Civil Justice Centre
1 Bridge Street West
Manchester
M3 3FX

Follow us on Twitter [@hmiprobation](https://twitter.com/hmiprobation)

ISBN: 978-1-914478-63-5

Foreword

This inspection is part of our programme of youth offending service (YOS) inspections. We have inspected and rated Wolverhampton Youth Offending Team (YOT) across three broad areas: the arrangements for organisational delivery of the service, the quality of work done with children sentenced by the courts, and the quality of out-of-court disposal work. Overall, Wolverhampton YOT was rated as 'Good'. We also inspected the quality of resettlement policy and provision, which was separately rated as 'Outstanding'.

The inspection found an effective service, with strengths apparent across assessment and service delivery for both court and out-of-court disposals. Reviewing was also robust in post-court cases. The YOT has an excellent understanding of what is required to deliver services and interventions to children and families, and work to promote this was evident. However, improvements were required in planning for a child's risk of harm to others. Clearer analysis and improved contingency planning were considered necessary to manage and mitigate these risks.

The YOT's arrangements for staffing, partnerships and information and facilities are rated 'Outstanding' and its governance and leadership are 'Good'.

The inspection found that the YOT adapted quickly to the impact of Covid-19 and ensured that children and their families continued to be supported. The service was creative in its approach to delivering interventions and this was especially evident in how it made adaptations to the referral order panel to ensure children and families remained included and supported throughout the process.

The YOT benefits from sound provision from health services, including a full-time forensic and clinical psychologist. There is an excellent framework in place to support work with victims using restorative practices, and with children who are displaying harmful sexual behaviour. However, there is limited provision across the area for children with special educational needs and disabilities, especially for those with education, health and care plans. The board recognises further work is required to improve this.

Considerable work has been carried out to analyse disproportionality in the numbers of black, Asian and minority ethnic children known to the YOT. Although this is encouraging from a strategic perspective, the board needs to do more to understand the experiences of these children so that the services delivered effectively support their needs.

The YOT has a resettlement policy in place that includes guidance for the resettlement support panels. These have been operating for a number of years and have a multi-agency membership, which helps to meet the needs of children leaving custody.















Staff are offered the opportunity for development through their roles as champions in specific areas of practice, and training is prioritised. We found that case managers go 'over and above' what is required to engage children and families. They are creative when delivering interventions and use language and techniques that support the trauma-informed approach promoted by the YOT.

In this report, we make a number of recommendations which we hope will support Wolverhampton to build on their strong foundations and ensure they continue to deliver a high-quality service for children.



Justin Russell
HM Chief Inspector of Probation

Ratings

Wolverhampton Youth Offending Team		Score	28/36
Overall rating		Good	
1. Organisational delivery			
1.1	Governance and leadership	Good	
1.2	Staff	Outstanding	
1.3	Partnerships and services	Outstanding	
1.4	Information and facilities	Outstanding	
2. Court disposals			
2.1	Assessment	Good	
2.2	Planning	Requires improvement	
2.3	Implementation and delivery	Outstanding	
2.4	Reviewing	Good	
3. Out-of-court disposals			
3.1	Assessment	Good	
3.2	Planning	Good	
3.3	Implementation and delivery	Outstanding	
3.4	Out-of-court disposal policy and provision	Good	
4. Resettlement			
4.1	Resettlement policy and provision	Outstanding	

Executive summary

Overall, Wolverhampton YOT is rated as: 'Good'. This rating has been determined by inspecting the YOT in three areas of its work, referred to as 'domains'. We inspect against 12 core 'standards', shared between the domains. The standards are based on established models and frameworks, which are grounded in evidence, learning and experience. They are designed to drive improvements in the quality of work with children who have offended.¹ Published scoring rules generate the overall YOT rating.² We inspected the quality of resettlement policy and provision separately and rated this work as: 'Outstanding'. The findings and subsequent ratings in those domains are described below.

Organisational delivery

The YOT's arrangements for partnership and services, staffing, and information and facilities are rated as 'Outstanding'. The arrangements for governance and leadership are rated as 'Good'.

Wolverhampton YOT management board members were actively involved in the National Standards audit and each has now been allocated a lead area with action plans to track and report on. The board is aware of the limited provision that is available across the area for children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), and especially for those with education, health and care plans (EHCPs). The YOT has access to speech and language services. Work has also been undertaken to train staff in recognising children's speech and language needs. However, the resources to develop this provision are limited and the YOT would benefit from increased capacity to ensure that all of the needs of YOT children are met effectively. Much work has been undertaken to analyse disproportionality in the numbers of black, Asian and minority ethnic children known to the YOT. This has resulted in partner agencies analysing their own data and action plans being developed. Although this is encouraging from a strategic perspective, the board needs to do more to understand the experiences of these children so that services are delivered which effectively support their needs.

Staff at the YOT report that they are comfortable with their workload and are offered the opportunity for development through their roles as champions in specific areas of practice. A trauma-informed approach to working with children and families is evident in the language used by staff and the creativity of the interventions that they deliver. Staff know the children very well and go 'over and above' what is expected of them to ensure children are engaged and receiving the appropriate provision. Training is prioritised and staff are encouraged to find new ways of working with children. The YOT has considered the views of staff regarding their working conditions and practice skills, and appropriately adapted their learning and development to ensure wherever possible the impact of Covid-19 has been minimised.

The YOT has a performance analyst who provides comprehensive performance reports. It has a strong offer from health services, including a full-time forensic and clinical psychologist. All children receive a health needs assessment. The YOT has access to an

¹ HM Inspectorate of Probation's standards can be found here:

<https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmiprobation/about-our-work/our-standards-and-ratings/>

² Each of the 12 standards is scored on a 0–3 scale in which 'Inadequate' = 0; 'Requires improvement' = 1; 'Good' = 2; 'Outstanding' = 3. Adding these scores produces a total score ranging from 0 to 36, which is banded to produce the overall rating, as follows: 0–6 = 'Inadequate', 7–18 = 'Requires improvement', 19–30 = 'Good', 31–36 = 'Outstanding'.

educational psychologist and a speech and language therapist, although it is noted that the speech and language therapist capacity is quite limited. YOT workers are trained in advocating for children with SEND and those with EHCPs. The YOT has an excellent restorative justice unit, which is victim-focused in both its direct and indirect reparation work.

The facilities available to YOT children at Retreat Street are a strength and offer high-quality provision, where children can access other agencies alongside the YOT. The children helped to design the premises and it is a welcoming, child-friendly space.

There is evidence that the service is continually learning and uses research to develop the services it provides. It has developed its use of technology to engage children and families and gathers feedback from them to improve the service offer.

Key findings about organisational delivery are as follows:

- Board members were fully involved with the Youth Justice Board (YJB) National Standards self-assessment and were allocated roles in specific areas of practice.
- The service manager is committed to delivering services that are research-led and evidence-based.
- Staff and managers go 'over and above' what is expected of them to ensure that children are engaged and receiving the appropriate provision.
- The process for referral orders is inclusive and encourages **engagement from the child and their family**.
- The trauma-informed approach is reflected in the range of interventions available. These were personalised to best meet the needs of the child.
- The YOT has its own dashboard, which gives it access to an excellent suite of data.
- The YOT has an impressive restorative justice unit, which takes a holistic approach to working with children and victims.
- Health provision to the YOT is good and staff consider the health needs of all of the children and decide who is best to work with them.
- The YOT reviews cases when serious incidents occur and learns from the outcomes of other areas' inspections in order to improve practice.
- The quality of management oversight in both post-court and out-of-court cases was a significant strength.

But:

- Although the board is presented with very comprehensive performance reports, some board members' knowledge of the profile and needs of the children was not always evident during the inspection.
- The partnership does not provide sufficient high-quality provision for children with SEND, especially those with an EHCP.
- The YOT has limited access to speech and language services, and although it accesses provision elsewhere, it has little capacity to develop the provision further.
- The YOT needs to be confident that staff are comfortable having conversations about children's lived experience when considering their ethnicity.

Court disposals

We took a detailed look at 11 community sentences managed by the YOT. We also conducted 11 interviews with the relevant case managers. We examined the quality of assessment, planning, implementation and delivery of services, and reviewing. Each of these elements was inspected in respect of work done to address desistance, to keep the child safe, and to keep other people safe.

Our key findings about court disposals are as follows:

- Assessments were satisfactory in the areas of desistance and safety and wellbeing. They take account of the child's strengths and protective factors, as well as their ability and motivation to change.
- Case managers involved children and their parents or carers in planning.
- When planning for the child's safety and wellbeing, their risks were addressed, and other agencies were involved appropriately.
- In the great majority of cases, implementation and delivery of services were satisfactory in all three areas of desistance, safety and wellbeing, and risk of harm to others.
- Case managers focused on developing and maintaining an effective relationship with children and their parents or carers.
- Staff were creative when delivering interventions and used language and techniques that support the trauma-informed approach promoted by the YOT.

But:

- When assessing a child's risk of harm to others, staff need to identify and analyse more clearly the risks that the child poses, including who is at risk and the nature of that risk.
- Staff do not regularly take account of a child's diversity needs when completing assessments.
- The concerns and risks related to actual and potential victims are not consistently considered when planning to address the risk of harm to others.
- Staff did not consistently set out the contingency arrangements to manage the child's safety and wellbeing and their risk of harm to others in the cases inspected.

Out-of-court disposals

We inspected 13 cases managed by the YOT that had received an out-of-court disposal. These consisted of five youth conditional cautions, six youth cautions and two community resolutions. We interviewed the case managers in 12 cases.

We examined the quality of assessment, planning, and implementation and delivery of services. Each of these elements was inspected in respect of work done to address desistance, to keep the child safe and to keep other people safe. The quality of the work undertaken for each factor needs to be above a specified threshold for each aspect of supervision to be rated as satisfactory.

We also inspected the quality of policy and provision in place for out-of-court disposals, using evidence from documents, meetings and interviews.

Our key findings about out-of-court disposals are as follows:

- When carrying out an assessment, case managers considered the child's strengths and protective factors, as well as their level of maturity, ability and motivation to change.
- Where a victim had been identified, their needs and wishes were taken into account. The views of parents or carers were considered as part of the assessment and planning process.
- Planning was rated as a strength in the areas of desistance and safety and wellbeing. It effectively set out the opportunities for community integration and supported access to mainstream services following completion of the out-of-court disposal work.
- Implementation and delivery of services were excellent in all three areas of desistance, a child's safety and wellbeing and their risk of harm to others.
- Staff used creative methods to help children participate in the interventions and exceeded the expectations of their role to meet the needs of the children and their families.
- The YOT has an effective deferred prosecution scheme that gives children the opportunity to engage with an intervention and then be diverted away from the criminal justice system.

But:

- Assessments of children's risk of harm to others need to identify more clearly who is at risk and the nature of the risk.
- Contingency planning needs to be evident so that the arrangements for managing a child's risk of harm to others is clear.

Resettlement

We inspected the quality of policy and provision in place for resettlement work for children leaving custody, using evidence from documents, meetings and interviews. To evaluate that work, we inspected one case managed by the YOT that had received a custodial sentence.

The YOT has had a resettlement policy in place for a number of years, which includes guidance on the operation of resettlement panels. The policy has been reviewed and updated. There is a local agreement with children's social care that all children will be released into appropriate accommodation. There is a representative from the secure estate on the management board, and evidence that the YOT appropriately escalates concerns about children in custody.

Our key findings about resettlement work are as follows:

- The YOT has resettlement panels that are well established and considered effective by staff and managers.
- There is a commitment to these panels from partners to support effective joint working.
- YOT staff have taken parents and carers and siblings to visits and facilitated video calls and telephone calls so that families can stay in touch.

- The management board has a designated member with oversight for the secure estate.
- There is a local arrangement with children's social care to ensure that all children are released to suitable accommodation.

But:

- There had been no specific training for staff in managing resettlement cases.

Recommendations

As a result of our inspection findings, we have made three recommendations that we believe, if implemented, will have a positive impact on the quality of youth offending services in Wolverhampton. This will improve the lives of the children in contact with youth offending services, and better protect the public.

The YOT management board should:

1. make sure that all YOT children with SEND, and especially those with an EHCP, have access to high-quality education and training services that are matched to their needs
2. ensure that staff are appropriately trained and confident in having conversations to understand black, Asian and minority ethnic children's experiences in order to improve the quality and suitability of service provision.

The YOT service manager should:

3. improve the quality of contingency planning in all cases, when managing and mitigating a child's risk of harm to others.

Background

Youth offending teams (YOTs) work with children aged 10 to 18 who have been sentenced by a court, or who have come to the attention of the police because of their offending behaviour, but have not been charged – instead, they were dealt with out of court. HM Inspectorate of Probation inspects both these aspects of youth offending services.

YOTs are statutory partnerships, and they are multidisciplinary, to deal with the needs of the whole child. They are required to have staff from local authority social care and education services, the police, the National Probation Service and local health services.³ Most YOTs are based within local authorities, although this can vary.

YOT work is governed and shaped by a range of legislation and guidance specific to the youth justice sector (such as the National Standards for Youth Justice) or else applicable across the criminal justice sector (for example, Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements guidance). The Youth Justice Board for England and Wales (YJB) provides some funding to YOTs. It also monitors their performance and issues guidance to them about how things are to be done.

Wolverhampton is part of the Black Country, which includes the four metropolitan district council areas of Dudley, Sandwell, Walsall and Wolverhampton. It is a city in the West Midlands and has a population of 262,000 based on 2018 mid-term estimates: an increase of almost five per cent from the 2011 census. As of 2019, children aged 10 to 17 years comprise 9.5 per cent of the population. In the 2015 Indices of Deprivation (IMD⁴) scale, Wolverhampton was ranked 17th (with one being the most deprived) of England's 326 local authorities, when ordered by 'rank of average score'.

The City of Wolverhampton has directorates with the relevant senior leadership team for Families, Organisations and Community and Place. The YOT's corporate governance structure sits within the children's social care division of the Families directorate. The YOT service manager is line managed by the Head of Specialist Support, who is accountable to the Deputy Director for Children's Services. The YOT's cohort of children for 2020-2021 showed that 90 per cent of all disposals and all custodial outcomes relate to boys and 10 per cent of the cohort are children in care. Black, Asian and minority ethnic children account for 52 per cent of all disposals and 83 per cent of custodial outcomes. Offences of violence against the person account for 48 per cent of all offences.

The fieldwork for the Wolverhampton YOT inspection started on 25 October 2021

³ The *Crime and Disorder Act 1998* set out the arrangements for local YOTs and partnership working.

⁴ Index of Multiple Deprivation.

Contextual facts

Population information⁵

201	First-time entrant rate per 100,000 in Wolverhampton YOT ⁶
167	First-time entrant rate per 100,000 in England and Wales
40.6%	Reoffending rate in Wolverhampton ⁷
35.6%	Reoffending rate in England and Wales

264,407	Total population Wolverhampton
26,657	Total youth population (10–17 years) in Wolverhampton

Caseload information⁸

Age	10–14 years	15–17 years
Wolverhampton YOS	13%	87%
National average	22%	78%

Race/ethnicity	White	Black and minority ethnic	Unknown
Wolverhampton 10-17-year old population ⁹	61%	39%	0%
Wolverhampton YOS	53%	46%	1%
National average	69%	28%	3%

Gender	Male	Female
Wolverhampton YOS	88%	12%
National average	85%	15%

⁵ Office for National Statistics. (2021). *UK population estimates, mid-2020*.

⁶ Youth Justice Board. (2021). *First-time entrants, January to December 2020*.

⁷ Ministry of Justice. (2021). *Proven reoffending statistics, January to December 2019*.

⁸ Youth Justice Board. (2021). *Youth justice annual statistics: 2019 to 2020*.

⁹ Data supplied by the YOT.

Additional caseload data¹⁰ All supplied by YOT as standard data.

51	Total current caseload: community sentences
4	Total current caseload in custody
91	Total current caseload: out-of-court disposals
13.6%	Proportion of current caseload 'children in care'
4.7%	Percentage of current caseload with child protection plan
19.1%	Percentage of current caseload with child in need plan
8.9%	Percentage of children aged 16 and under in a pupil referral unit or alternative education
15.1%	Percentage of current caseload aged 17+ not in education, training or employment

For children subject to court disposals (including resettlement case):

Offence types ¹¹	%
Violence against the person	82%
Theft and handling stolen goods	9%
Other indictable offences	9%

¹⁰ Data supplied by the YOT, reflecting the caseload at the time of the inspection announcement.

¹¹ Data from the cases assessed during this inspection.

1. Organisational delivery

The YOT's corporate governance structure sits within the children's social care division of the council's Families directorate. The YOT's integration with partners is assisted by the Head of Service for Specialist Support having a broad portfolio, including edge of care services, a residential children's home and, more recently, the Partnership Exploitation and Missing Hub.

Wolverhampton YOT management board is well established, with many experienced members having attended over a sustained period of time. The chair has recently changed, although was the vice chair previously, and so this has provided consistency. Members were actively involved in the National Standards audit and now have lead areas with action plans on which they report progress. The management team is stable and provides an effective conduit between the strategic and operational elements of the service. Each manager has an action plan that links to the youth justice plan.

The board is aware of the limited provision that is available across the area for children with SEND, and especially for those with EHCPs. The YOT has limited access to speech and language services, and although it accesses provision elsewhere, it has little capacity to further develop the provision for YOT children. The YOT has undertaken work to analyse disproportionality in the numbers of black, Asian and minority ethnic children known to the YOT. This has resulted in partner agencies analysing their own data and action plans being developed.

Staff at the YOT report they are comfortable with their workload, receive regular supervision and are offered the opportunity for development, such as through their roles as champions in specific areas of practice. A trauma-informed approach to working with children and families is evident in the language used by staff and the creativity of the interventions that they deliver. Staff know the children very well and go beyond what is expected of them to ensure children are engaged and receiving the appropriate provision. Training is prioritised and staff are encouraged to find innovative ways of working with children. The YOT has considered the views of staff regarding their working conditions and practice skills. It has adapted its learning and development offer as a result of Covid-19 to ensure staff feel appropriately trained and supported. Staff development is also evidenced. The service has recruited practitioners to act-up into more senior positions, seen staff progress from practitioner level to management roles and supported practitioners to achieve external qualifications.

The YOT has a performance analyst who provides detailed performance reports. These allow the YOT to analyse the data on and profile of the children known to the service. The YOT has a strong offer from health services, including a full-time forensic and clinical psychologist, and all children receive a health needs assessment. The YOT has access to an educational psychologist and a speech and language therapist and YOT workers are trained in advocating for SEND children and those with EHCPs. The council recognises that Wolverhampton has high youth unemployment and that this impacts on the quality of provision for SEND children, especially those who are older than 16 and have an EHCP. The YOT has an excellent restorative justice unit that is victim-focused in both its direct and indirect reparation work.

The facilities available to children at Retreat Street are a strength and offer high-quality provision, where children can access other agencies alongside the YOT. The children helped to design the premises and it is a welcoming, child-friendly space.

There is evidence that the service is continually learning and uses research to develop the services it provides. It has developed its use of technology to engage children and families and gathers feedback from them to influence and inform how to improve the service provision.

The YOT has the appropriate policies in place and guidance on these is available. The YOT has had a resettlement policy in place for a number of years, which includes guidance on the operation of resettlement panels. The policy has been reviewed and updated. There is a local agreement with children's social care that all children will be released into appropriate accommodation. There is a representative from the secure estate on the management board, and evidence that the YOT appropriately escalates concerns regarding children in custody.

Strengths:

- Board members were fully involved with the YJB National Standards self-assessment and were allocated roles in specific areas of practice.
- The service manager is committed to delivering services that are research-led and evidence-based.
- Staff and managers go beyond what is expected of them to ensure that children are engaged and receiving the appropriate provision.
- The process for referral orders is inclusive and encourages **engagement from the child and their family**.
- The trauma-informed approach is reflected in the range of interventions that are available. These are personalised to best meet the needs of the child.
- The YOT has its own dashboard, which gives it access to an excellent suite of data.
- The YOT has an impressive restorative justice unit, which takes a holistic approach to working with children and victims.
- Health provision to the YOT is good and staff consider the health needs of all of the children known to the YOT and decide who is best to work with them.
- The YOT reviews cases when serious incidents occur and learns from the outcomes of other areas' inspections in order to improve practice.

Areas for improvement:

- The partnership does not provide sufficient high-quality provision for SEND children, especially those with an EHCP.
- The YOT has limited access to speech and language services, and although it accesses provision elsewhere, it has little capacity to continue to develop the provision further.
- The YOT needs to develop staff confidence to ensure they are comfortable having conversations to understand the child's experience when considering their ethnicity.

Organisations that are well led and well managed are more likely to achieve their aims. We inspect against four standards.

1.1. Governance and leadership



The governance and leadership of the YOT supports and promotes the delivery of a high-quality, personalised and responsive service for all children.

Good

Key data¹²

Total spend in previous financial year	£2,242,456
Total projected budget current for financial year	£2,365,837

In making a judgement about governance and leadership, we take into account the answers to the following three questions:

Is there an effective local vision and strategy for the delivery of a high-quality, personalised and responsive service for all children?

The chair of the board is a superintendent from West Midlands Police, who has been a member of the board since January 2020. Until June 2021, the chair was from Public Health and the current chair was the vice chair. The board is attended by representatives with the right level of seniority and the chair is effective in managing the members' participation and engagement.

The board includes all statutory partners, as well as some non-statutory agencies, for example a representative from the voluntary and community sector, the court's youth bench chair and a person from HM Young Offender Institution (HMYOI) Werrington. The consistency of attendance by the probation service and the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) was challenged by the chair and has now improved.

New board members receive an induction into their role from the chair and/or the service manager. The board's terms of reference were reviewed in March 2021 and standing agenda items were agreed as follows: staffing, partnership update, youth justice plan progress, performance report, disproportionality, safeguarding update and a 'spotlight on practice' section. At a meeting recently, the board heard directly from a child on a YOT order. Listening to the child's experiences had such an impact that some board members met with the child, following the board meeting, to learn more.

Although there have not been any specific development days, one meeting included a workshop to discuss priorities for the YOT. Another meeting focused on the role of each of the members, including an outline of what they can offer the board. The youth justice plan for 2021-2022 was developed following a number of events with the management board. Children, staff, and community panel volunteers were also consulted to gain their views.

Board members were fully involved with the YJB National Standards self-assessment and were allocated roles in specific areas of practice. This led to the board members and staff working together to complete the self-assessment. One board member was allocated the national standard relating to court services. To increase their knowledge of this area of practice, the board member attended a number of court sessions alongside YOT staff.

¹² Data supplied by the YOT.

Do the partnership arrangements actively support effective service delivery?

Issues impacting on youth offending are prominent on the agendas of other key strategic groups within the City of Wolverhampton. These include the Safer Wolverhampton Partnership, the Health and Wellbeing board, the Safeguarding Together board and the police's local Tactical Delivery Board.

The number of looked after children on an out-of-court disposal or a court order is in line with the number of looked after children generally in the Wolverhampton area. The YOT regularly monitors arrangements between children's homes and the police to ensure that policies and practices do not result in children being criminalised unnecessarily.

The management board escalated safeguarding concerns regarding two children in HMYOI Werrington. These concerns were raised by the management board to the Wolverhampton safeguarding manager and then to the safeguarding board for Werrington and assurances were received from the establishment.

The partnership does not provide sufficient high-quality provision for children with SEND children, especially those with an EHCP. The board has acknowledged this and will develop an action plan that also takes account of the findings from the local authority's recent SEND inspection.

Does the leadership of the YOT support effective service delivery?

The service manager has held various roles within the YOT and has been in their current role since 2018. The service manager, the team leader and the operational managers are knowledgeable about youth justice and work well together in supporting the team.

The service manager attends the management board, and operational managers will attend to present on specific pieces of work as part of the 'spotlight on practice' item on the agenda. Communication from the board is shared through the management and team meetings. Each manager is responsible for an action plan linked to the priorities in the youth justice plan based on their roles and responsibilities.

The service manager is committed to delivering services that are research-led and evidence-based. Staff are encouraged to contribute ideas on how their practice with children and families can be changed and/or improved.

The staff survey was completed by 39 staff members, and 71 per cent of these understood the vision and mission of the YOT very well. Alongside this, 54 per cent were 'very aware' of the activities of the management board and understand its role and 43 per cent were 'quite aware'. Most staff who completed the survey felt they were updated on strategic issues.

Covid-19 meant that the YOT had to adapt its service delivery. It moved to a range of digital platforms, using new technologies, while also maintaining face-to-face contact with children and families. The YOT has delivered out-of-court disposals and referral order panels virtually. The restorative justice offer introduced a range of home-based activities for reparation and victim work was also completed virtually. Throughout the pandemic, face-to-face contact has been maintained with children through utilising outdoor spaces for sessions. This has allowed staff to maintain relationships and manage risks and safeguarding concerns appropriately. It also further embedded the whole family service delivery model, with contacts happening within family households.

1.2. Staff



Staff within the YOT are empowered to deliver a high-quality, personalised and responsive service for all children.

Outstanding

Key staffing data¹³

Total staff headcount	45
Vacancy rate (total unfilled posts as percentage of total staff headcount)	10.1%
Average caseload case managers ¹⁴	8
Average annual working days sickness (all staff) ¹⁵	3.2%

In making a judgement about staffing, we take into account the answers to the following four questions:

Do staffing and workload levels support the delivery of a high-quality, personalised and responsive service for all children?

The YOT has a team of 45 staff. The team structure sits under the local authority's head of specialist support, alongside edge of care services, a residential children's home and, more recently, the Partnership Exploitation and Missing Hub. There is a service manager, one team leader, three operational managers, and two assessment and development officers. The main case management team has a total of nine qualified social workers and 13 YOT officers.

YOT social workers have case responsibility for all the statutory work within the service. They complete the referral order reports and pre-sentence reports for court and any custody and resettlement assessments or parole reports. Due to the increase in the number of out-of-court disposals, they are now involved in assessing and delivering these. YOT officers have case responsibility for out-of-court disposals. All the YOT officer staff are trained in AssetPlus and deliver a range of activities. They have practice lead areas, including participation (mentoring), resettlement provision and support for children who are subject to the Intensive Supervision and Surveillance programme.

The YOT team leader is responsible for allocating cases, taking into consideration the caseload numbers held by case managers and their specific skills and knowledge. The YOT team leader completes a number of enquiries before deciding who would be best to supervise the case and discusses the case with the case manager to ensure any sensitive issues are considered. Out-of-court disposals are triaged to identify the most complex and serious offences, which are then allocated to a YOT social worker. If a case allocated to a YOT officer requires support from a social worker because of any risks identified, co-working arrangements are put in place. Allocation also considers which staff have previously been involved with the family so that consistency of worker is prioritised.

¹³ Data supplied by YOT and reflecting staffing at the time of the inspection announcement.

¹⁴ Data supplied by YOT; based on staffing and workload at the time of the inspection announcement.

¹⁵ Data supplied by YOT; average days lost up to October 2021.

On average, case managers had approximately eight cases each at the time of the inspection, although this has been affected by Covid-19 and it is anticipated that this will rise. The staff survey was completed by 39 members of staff and 97 per cent of respondents said that they find their workload or caseload manageable.

There was evidence in the inspected cases that staff and managers know the children very well and go 'over and above' what is expected of them to ensure children are engaged and receiving the appropriate provision.

Do the skills of YOT staff support the delivery of a high-quality, personalised and responsive service for all children?

For a number of years, the YOT has been developing its trauma-informed practice approach to working with children. YOT interventions have been designed within the ARC (Attachment, Regulation and Competency) framework of trauma-informed practice. Programmes such as sports, theatre and creative arts build attachments, provide opportunities for co-regulation and assist children in developing their thinking skills and confidence. This approach also includes a 15-day interventions meeting following a child's order or disposal starting. At this meeting, managers chair a review of the planned interventions to ensure they are appropriate, timely and trauma-informed, and that relevant staff and resources are available.

The trauma-informed approach is reflected in the range of interventions that are available. These are personalised to best meet the needs of the child. For example, YOT workers carry games with them, such as UNO and Jenga, to support engagement with children. The YOT also has access to the 'gazebo theatre' (drama and art), boxing and gym facilities, and resources for creating music and music videos.

Staff are involved in working groups to develop specific areas of practice. They can volunteer to be the 'champion' for particular initiatives. These include child exploitation and trauma-informed practice.

Service volunteers feel well supported, receive regular one-to-one supervision, attend quarterly meetings and can access relevant ongoing training. Training has recently included adverse childhood experiences, trauma-informed practice and disproportionality. The YOT has tried to ensure the panel members represent the diversity of the local community, and currently volunteers reflect a range of ages, backgrounds and cultural heritage. The YOT aims to have the same panel members on the initial referral order panel and the review panels in order for them to develop a relationship with the child and their family. YOT staff spend time with volunteers both before and after the panel to discuss any issues that have arisen.

During Covid-19, the YOT changed the way the referral panels were run in order to ensure the child remained engaged and the required technology was available to everybody. For each panel a YOT staff member visited the child's home before the panel began and used their technology to log into MS Teams. This offered the staff member the opportunity to explain the process to the child and their family, which encouraged engagement and inclusivity. The staff member guides the child and their family through the virtual panel and checks that they understand what has happened after the panel has finished. The views of the child and their family are captured after the panel. Because of this, attendance at panels has increased and there is less need for them to be rearranged.

There is a seconded police officer who leads on out-of-court disposals. This person shares information and intelligence between the police and the YOT and attends relevant risk panels. The seconded YOT probation officer post is vacant, and during the period of the vacancy the Probation Service has offered funding to cover the gap. Unfortunately, it has been difficult to recruit to the role, as it is for three days per week. It has now been

agreed that the role be full-time, and the recruitment process is underway. Although the service manager takes the strategic lead for Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements in the absence of a probation officer, inspectors noted that staff knowledge of the processes is limited and needs further development. Cases appropriate for transition to the Probation Service have been dealt with on a case-by-case basis during this time.

Feedback from the courts highlights that input from officers in the YOT's court team, and information in their pre-sentence reports, demonstrates that they have a detailed understanding of children's health and educational needs. It states that, in recent years, the courts have been impressed with the YOT's understanding of trauma and how it impacts children. Courts also identify how the YOT uses this understanding of trauma to inform its interventions and programmes. There is good communication between the YOT and the courts, and the chair of the Youth Court Bench is a member of the YOT management board.

Does the oversight of work support high-quality delivery and professional development?

Staff receive regular monthly supervision, which covers case load (if appropriate), workload, any challenges to their emotional and mental health, the quality of work and areas of improvement and professional development. Annual appraisals (called professional conversations) are completed, and procedures are in place for addressing staff competency. An induction process for all new staff members is in place. Seconded staff are supervised by their home agency, which completes an appraisal, as well as by their YOT line manager.

Management oversight met the needs of the case in 91 per cent of post-court cases and in all of the out-of-court disposals and this is a significant achievement. Staff reported feeling supported by both their managers and peers.

Are arrangements for learning and development comprehensive and responsive?

The YOT has a training and development plan in place for 2021-2022. Recent training has included Structured Assessment of Violence Risk in Youth (SAVRY) training and AssetPlus, as well as Assessment, Intervention and Moving On (AIM3) training for working with harmful sexual behaviour cases, and briefings on contextual safeguarding and exploitation.

Staff have access to a mandatory training programme across children's services, which includes safeguarding courses, and feel encouraged to take up training opportunities. The YOT actively promotes staff development through offering management opportunities within the service and supporting staff to complete external qualifications.

Do managers pay sufficient attention to staff engagement?

Staff reported feeling very well supported by both Wolverhampton Council and the YOT throughout the Covid-19 pandemic. During the first lockdowns there were regular virtual meetings and 'check-ins' from both managers and peers.

The YOT has completed a learning and development report based on a number of surveys of staff's opinions on their practice skills, learning and development, and working conditions during the Covid-19 pandemic. Going forward, staff will have a blended model of home-based working and working within the office and in community venues.

Staff receive praise and appreciation emails from senior leaders and through supervision with their line managers. Team meetings encourage the sharing of positive news and recognition of good practice and the council also circulates a newsletter that recognises effective practice.

1.3. Partnerships and services



A comprehensive range of high-quality services is in place, enabling personalised and responsive provision for all children.

Outstanding

Caseload characteristics¹⁶

Percentage of current caseload with emotional wellbeing or mental health issues	37%
Percentage of current caseload with substance misuse issues	41.8%
Percentage of current caseload with a learning disability, a learning difficulty or subject to an education, health and care plan	32.2%

In making a judgement about partnerships and services, we take into account the answers to the following questions:

Is there a sufficiently comprehensive and up-to-date analysis of the profile of children, used by the YOT to deliver well-targeted services?

The YOT has its own dashboard, which gives it access to an excellent suite of data. Comprehensive performance management reports are provided for the YOT management board. These include national and local indicators and very detailed profiling and analysis.

Regular monitoring reports presented to the management board include a quarterly health report, victim engagement report and a participation report. Further in-depth analysis reports are also provided, and these have recently included reports on serious youth violence, disproportionality and a review of vulnerable learners, including children with EHCPs.

The YOT's performance is monitored across the partnership, and the performance reports are shared with other partners, including the Wolverhampton Children's Senior Leadership Team, Strategic Executive Board and the Safeguarding Together Partnership.

The YJB published data, which is time delayed, indicates that the number of first-time entrants and the rate of reoffending are higher than the national average, while the number of children in custody is lower than the national average. More recent local data shows that the first-time entrant rate for 2020-2021 has fallen, both in the number of entrants to the system and the number of offences committed compared with the previous year. The reoffending live tracker toolkit showed that the frequency of reoffending and the number of offences committed were lower in Wolverhampton than the national rate. The number of children receiving a custodial sentence was also decreasing.

The number of cases on the YOT caseload in October 2021 was 146, of which 11 per cent were female, 50.7 per cent were black, Asian and minority ethnic (an increase from the annual YJB statistics quoted above), 33.6 per cent had a disability, 37 per cent had emotional, mental health and wellbeing needs, and 32.2 per cent had learning needs, including special educational needs, or had an EHCP. The YOT is proactively monitoring these figures and the management board recently received a report about girls in the youth justice system.

¹⁶ Data supplied by the YOT

Does the YOT partnership provide the volume, range and quality of services and interventions required to meet the needs of all children?

The YOT has strong partnership arrangements with children's services and community safety areas of work. This is assisted by the Head of Service for Specialist Support having a broad portfolio, including edge of care services, a residential children's home and, more recently, the Partnership Exploitation and Missing Hub.

The YOT uses a number of screening tools to identify risk, whether it is the risk to a child's safety and wellbeing or the risk they pose to others. These include the SAVRY (violence), AIM3 (sexual harmful behaviour) and Trauma Symptom Checklists (TSC), which is linked to a trauma-informed approach to practice. There are Risk Management and Safety and Wellbeing panels, where areas of high concern are highlighted and managed. These are multi-agency meetings chaired by a YOT operational manager. The YOT is represented at Multi-Agency Criminal Exploitation (MACE) meetings, the Partnership Exploitation and Missing Hub and the Partnership Gang Forum.

The YOT has a good relationship with the children's homes in the local area, and the staff from these attend meetings at the YOT. Restorative practice work has been delivered to staff in placements and the success of these interventions reflected in the low number of looked after children (20 out of 146) on out-of-court disposals and post-court orders.

The YOT has an impressive restorative justice unit (RJU) and all YOT staff are trained in restorative practice. The Witness Care Service provides victim contact details for cases that have been heard in court, and the police provide the details for out-of-court disposals. The YOT sends a letter to set up a meeting within seven days, unless the victim decides to opt out of the process. This is followed up with a telephone call to see what support is needed and what can be offered in terms of the different options for restorative practice. Victims are given the opportunity to complete a statement so that their experience can inform the referral order panel, out-of-court decision-making, and the pre-sentence report. There is a weekly case discussion meeting that decides which is the best way to work with the victims in order to promote a victim-centred approach. A number of restorative practices are available, including letters of explanation and letters of apology, shuttle mediation and face-to-face meetings. There is a desire for all children to take part in victim empathy work, as the RJU believes it is vital that victims' views are understood, even if the victim does not wish to take part.

The YOT has held a number of face-to-face restorative meetings, some of which have included corporate victims. Restorative justice staff work with the child and the injured person and feel that working with both parties, knowing the case and understanding the different perspectives, provides a more holistic approach to restorative practice. The victim workers will also share information with case managers regarding what licence conditions the victim has requested.

Reparation projects are discussed at the RJU's weekly meetings. They include the 'Bladed Angel of Change' (creative arts project that deals with the dangers of knife crime), 'Let's Get Cooking', the 'Get Outdoors Project' (developed as a response to Covid-19), 'The Endz' project (dealing with anti-social behaviour), social media and online safety, 'SHUZ' (a victim empathy project), photography, working on allotments, and making cards and jewellery. Some of these had to stop during lockdown, although most are now available again. The YOT also offers the opportunity for children to obtain Award Scheme Accreditation and Development Network (ASDAN) qualifications for each activity.

The YOT has links with the voluntary and community sector, including Catch22 and the Kitchen Table Talks service delivered by First Class Foundation, which uses creative and

innovative ways to support parents and families through face-to-face or online communication.

The YOT has set up a peer mentoring service, but due to the restrictions of Covid-19 the service has yet to see the impact of this. Its intention is that children previously known to the service will be trained to provide a mentoring intervention to YOT children.

Are arrangements with statutory partners, providers and other agencies established, maintained and used effectively to deliver high-quality services?

Health provision to the YOT is of a high standard. There is a regular 'Health Summit' meeting, which includes all health staff and partnership managers, chaired by the YOT operations manager. It considers the health needs of children, decides who is best to work with them, and is a platform for operational planning to deliver health services. It also provides the opportunity to quality assure the work of the team. Every child known to the YOT is triaged to identify their health needs. The YOT nurse completes a full health assessment, which includes GP registration, dental care and emotional wellbeing. The nurse also works directly with children, including to provide a 'sleep' intervention, which helps children to regulate their sleep patterns, and refers them on to wider health provision, including sexual health services as appropriate.

The YOT has a full-time forensic and clinical psychologist, who provides consultations with staff, as well as psychological assessments and intervention work with children. They also signpost children to wider emotional mental health and wellbeing services. The YOT also has access to a liaison and diversion worker for children in police custody, who completes health background checks and makes referrals, where relevant.

The YOT has a seconded speech and language therapist for two days a week, who provides assessments where needed and offers consultations to YOT staff. They also work with looked after children and the pupil referral unit. This is a limited provision and does not allow for developments in this area of work to meet the specific needs of children known to the YOT. There is a commissioned service to support children with substance misuse, which includes a worker who is seconded for three days per week. This post is currently vacant but interim arrangements are in place.

The YOT is represented on the Education Inclusion Support and Alternative Provision Panel, which focuses on reducing school exclusions. This is helped by the Back on Track project, which is available in some schools and identifies and works with Year seven, eight and nine pupils who are at risk of exclusion and of offending. For one day a week, the YOT has access to an educational psychologist, who will complete assessments as well as collaborate with schools to ensure that the child's educational needs are being met. They provide consultation and training for YOT staff who are working with SEND children and children with an EHCP.

Previously the YOT had a Connexions worker, who provided intensive support to children so that they could access the most appropriate provision for them. At the time of the inspection this post was vacant, and recruitment was underway. The YOT is also currently recruiting for an education, training and employment (ETE) adviser. The YOT can also access the Impact Project. This supports 16- to 18-year-olds and finds suitable ETE opportunities for them, although it is subject to short-term funding. The YOT acknowledges that ETE provision for children over 16 years old, especially those with an EHCP, is limited. This is reflected in the council's £3 million investment to reduce youth unemployment across Wolverhampton.

The YOT's relationship with children's social care is good, and staff are invited to and attend all meetings regarding children in need, children on a child protection plan and looked after children. Staff trained in AIM3 work jointly on cases where there has been harmful sexual behaviour. This follows the model of good practice.

Involvement of children and their parents or carers

The YOT facilitates and supports a Voices from Youth Justice forum, which was set up in August 2019. These are participation sessions that enable children to meet and work together throughout the year and gain awards. The forum also links with the local authority participation officer and the Youth Council.

As part of the inspection process, children are invited to participate in a text survey, and those whose cases are inspected are offered the opportunity to speak to an inspector, to give their feedback.

Seven children returned the text survey, with all rating the YOT as eight or more out of 10 (with 10 being 'fantastic').

Inspectors spoke to three children, and one parent. They all knew the aims of the YOT and felt that their workers had the right skills to do the work.

One child said:

"The best thing about my YOT worker was that they didn't make me feel like a bad person and listened to me."

A parent said:

"We wish our kids could be perfect. I try my best, but it's not perfect, my child's YOT workers understand this, don't judge us or me as a mother they just support us and my child's journey to change".

1.4. Information and facilities



Timely and relevant information is available and appropriate facilities are in place to support a high-quality, personalised and responsive approach for all children.

Outstanding

In making a judgement about information and facilities, we take into account the answers to the following four questions:

Do the policies and guidance in place enable staff to deliver a high-quality service, meeting the needs of all children?

There is a full range of policies and guidance in place, which are accessible to staff. People are kept up to date with any changes through emails and team meetings. Information-sharing protocols are in place and understood across the partnership. There is an escalation process for all partners to help in challenging another agency and staff feel supported by managers in raising concerns.

Does the YOT's delivery environment(s) meet the needs of all children and enable staff to deliver a high-quality service?

The plan in 2020 had been to move the YOT from the premises where it had been for 20 years, as the building had deteriorated. This happened quicker than expected, as the

office was closed during the first Covid-19 lockdown in March 2020. The YOT moved into its new premises (Retreat Street) in June 2021, which is a set of offices attached to the fire station. Children known to the YOT designed the décor and decided on the type of furniture and what security was needed at the premises. They also chose motivational quotes to have on the walls around the building. Staff and partner agencies can base themselves at Retreat Street, where they can see children and deliver interventions in child-friendly rooms. After the Covid-19 restrictions are lifted, the YOT envisages that staff will balance their time between working in the office, in community venues and at home.

Do the information and communications technology (ICT) systems enable staff to deliver a high-quality service, meeting the needs of all children?

YOT staff are able to share information through access to children's social care systems and relevant partners have their own access to the YOT case management system. The YOT case management system enables the YOT to produce data on performance. As a result of Covid-19, all staff, including those who are normally office-based, were issued with laptops and phones. The YOT has developed the Viewpoint Hub for gathering feedback from children and families. It has hosted Microsoft Teams live events during lockdown and is developing a web-based intervention site that children will be able to access to complete a range of offence-related programme activities.

Are analysis, evidence and learning used effectively to drive improvement?

The YOT has a monitoring system in place for quality assuring work. Managers review all AssetPlus assessments at every stage, and there is a gatekeeping process for pre-sentence reports and referral order reports. Managers complete regular audits and benchmarking exercises, and these are supported by staff across all grades. One day every three months is set aside for the auditing process.

The YOT was recently part of a multi-agency community risk meeting audit, which looked at five cases from different agencies' perspectives. The service has also completed a number of thematic audits looking at specific areas of practice, including a restorative justice and victim audit and a report on the Back on Track project.

A participation report is produced and reported to the management board. It outlines the feedback that has been collated from children through forums, self-assessments and the Viewpoint Hub. The feedback includes the different activities that children have been involved in, for example their experience of the referral order panel, reparation, the out-of-court disposal panel and workshops.

There is evidence that the YOT reviews cases when serious incidents occur and learns from the outcomes of other areas' inspections in order to improve practice.

Diversity

Throughout our standards, we expect a personalised and responsive approach for all children, which includes taking account of their diversity and protected characteristics. Those factors may influence our judgements in specific standards. Here, we present an overall summary of the approach to diversity that we found in this YOT.

Based on the 2011 census data, 61 per cent of 10–17-year-olds in Wolverhampton are white and 39 per cent are from a black, Asian or minority ethnic background. Of staff at the YOT, 34 per cent are from a black, Asian or minority ethnic background and 20 per cent are male. Black, Asian and minority ethnic children are over-represented in the YOT.

In 2020-2021, 90 per cent of all disposals and 100 per cent of custodial outcomes related to boys. In particular, 52 per cent of all disposals and 83 per cent of custodial outcomes related to black, Asian and minority ethnic children. Of children known to the YOT, 37 per cent were assessed as having emotional, mental health and wellbeing concerns and 32 per cent had a learning disability, learning difficulty or were subject to an education, health and care plan.

The trauma-informed approach is reflected in the range of interventions that are available to meet the diverse needs of children. The YOT has access to an educational psychologist and a forensic and clinical psychologist, who work alongside YOT practitioners to help identify the appropriate interventions that should be delivered to meet the individual needs of the child.

There was evidence that the YOT has tried to ensure the panel members represent the diversity of the local community, and currently volunteers reflect a range of ages, backgrounds and cultural heritage.

The YOT uses the YJB disproportionality toolkit and the management board commissioned a report to analyse performance from December 2019 to December 2020. An action plan was implemented, and this is regularly reviewed. Actions included setting up a YOT equality forum, completing cultural competency training and peer mentoring training, setting up the YJB Levelling the Playing Field project and recruiting panel members from more diverse backgrounds. A number of changes have also been made to the out-of-court disposal arrangements to try to address disproportionality. The YOT is adapting the children's feedback questionnaire to capture the child's lived experience when considering their ethnicity. However, the YOT needs to be confident that staff are comfortable in having conversations with children about their diversity and know what is expected of them. It can then ensure that it has appropriate provision in place to support the identity and cultural heritage of black, Asian and minority ethnic children.

2. Court disposals

We took a detailed look at 11 community sentences managed by the YOT. We also conducted 11 interviews with the relevant case managers. We examined the quality of assessment, planning, implementation and delivery of services, and reviewing. Each of these elements was inspected in respect of work done to address desistance, keep the child safe and keep other people safe.

HM Inspectorate of Probation's ratings panel applied professional discretion in relation to the ratings given to our standards for the quality of assessment and reviewing. The case data was reviewed and identifying contingency arrangements when considering a child's risk of harm to others was judged by inspectors to be insufficient. There was evidence, however, that practice was strong when case managers assessed and reviewed a child's desistance and their safety and wellbeing. After considering all of the evidence in the round and the views of the lead inspector, the panel agreed to move the judgement on both these standards from 'Requires improvement' to 'Good'.

The great majority of assessments were strong in the areas of desistance and safety and wellbeing. Case managers considered the child's personal circumstances, including the wider familial and social context, and information from other agencies. They took account of the child's strengths and protective factors, and their ability and motivation to change. Analysing the child's diversity, however, needs developing. We found that most cases were sufficient when assessing a child's risk of harm to others; however, there was room for improvement. Although case managers used different sources of information and involved other agencies when appropriate, they needed to identify and analyse more clearly the risks that children pose to others, including who is at risk and the nature of that risk.

Nearly all of the cases we inspected were satisfactory for planning in relation to desistance, and in most cases the manager appropriately planned for the child's safety and wellbeing. Case managers took account of the child's personal circumstances, and considered their strengths and protective factors, as well as their level of maturity and motivation to change. We found that case managers involved children and their parents or carers in the planning. When planning for the child's safety and wellbeing, case managers addressed their risks, and involved other agencies appropriately. However, planning could have given more consideration to the needs and wishes of victims. The concerns and risks related to actual and potential victims were not consistently considered when planning to address the risk of harm to others. Work to set out contingency arrangements to manage the child's safety and wellbeing and their risk of harm to others should be improved.

Implementation and delivery of services was satisfactory in the great majority of cases in all three areas of desistance, safety and wellbeing, and risk of harm to others. Case managers focused on developing and maintaining an effective relationship with children and their parents or carers and they encouraged and enabled the child's compliance with the court order. We found that case managers went beyond what was required to engage children and families. They were creative when delivering interventions and used language and techniques that support the trauma-informed approach promoted by the YOT.

The great majority of reviews were satisfactory in the areas of desistance and safety and wellbeing. Case managers identified and responded to changes in the child's circumstances and took account of their strengths and protective factors. They considered the child's motivation and included the parents or carers in the reviewing process. When case managers reviewed safety and wellbeing, they included information from other

agencies and adjusted the ongoing plan accordingly. Although most of the cases inspectors reviewed were satisfactory, contingency planning could be improved. Staff must ensure that any necessary adjustments in the ongoing plan of work to manage and minimise the risk of harm to others are made. Planning to keep other people safe was the weakest area of practice across both post-court orders and out-of-court disposals.

Strengths:

- Assessments were strong in the areas of desistance and safety and wellbeing. They took account of the child's strengths and protective factors, and their ability and motivation to change
- Case managers involved children and their parents or carers in planning.
- When planning for the child's safety and wellbeing, their risks were addressed, and other agencies are involved appropriately.
- Delivery of services was strong in the great majority of cases in all three areas of desistance, safety and wellbeing, and risk of harm to others.
- Case managers focused on developing and maintaining an effective relationship with children and their parents or carers. Staff went 'over and above' what is required to engage children and families.
- Staff were creative when delivering interventions and used language and techniques that support the trauma-informed approach promoted by the YOT.

Areas for improvement:

- When assessing a child's risk of harm to others, staff need to identify and analyse more clearly the risks that the child poses, including who is at risk and the nature of that risk.
- Staff do not regularly take account of a child's diversity needs when completing assessments.
- The concerns and risks related to actual and potential victims are not consistently considered when planning to address the risk of harm to others.
- Staff did not consistently set out the contingency arrangements to manage the child's safety and wellbeing and their risk of harm to others in the cases inspected.

Work with children sentenced by the courts will be more effective if it is well targeted, planned and implemented. In our inspections, we look at a sample of cases. In each of those cases, we inspect against four standards.

2.1. Assessment



Assessment is well-informed, analytical and personalised, actively involving the child and their parents or carers.

Good

Our rating¹⁷ for assessment is based on the following key questions:

	% 'Yes'
Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to support the child's desistance?	82%
Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep the child safe?	73%
Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep other people safe?	64%

Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to support the child's desistance?

In seven out of the 11 cases inspected, the assessment had sufficient analysis of offending behaviour, including the child's attitudes towards, and motivation for, their offending. Staff considered the child's diversity issues in seven out of 11 cases and their personal circumstances, including the wider familial and social context, in all cases. The assessment was informed by information from other agencies in all cases. In all but one case, the assessment focused on the child's strengths and their protective factors, and recognised their level of maturity, ability and motivation to change.

The child's views were considered in all cases, and those of their parents or carers were included in all relevant cases. The needs and wishes of the victim were taken into account in all but one of the relevant cases.

The factors that are most related to a child's offending are self-identity, learning and education, training and employment, and their living arrangements. In nine out of the 11 cases, the assessment analysed sufficiently how to address these factors and support desistance.

One inspector noted:

"The assessment describes a supportive home and structured lifestyle, including good attendance at school and community activities, such as links to sports clubs and positive peer associates."

Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep the child safe?

In seven out of the 11 cases, staff identified and analysed the risks to a child's safety and wellbeing. In nine out of 11 cases, assessments drew appropriately on assessments or information held by other agencies. In eight out of 11 cases, staff had given enough attention to analysing the controls or interventions that best promoted the child's safety and wellbeing. Inspectors judged the safety and wellbeing risk classification as reasonable in all but one case. Overall, the assessment analysed sufficiently how to keep the child safe in eight out of 11 cases inspected.

¹⁷ The rating for the standard is driven by the lowest score on each of the key questions, which is placed in a rating band, indicated in bold in the table. See Annexe 2 for a more detailed explanation.

This was evidenced by one inspector, who said:

“The assessment discussed concerns around the child’s possible exploitation and the level of risk they may be experiencing. This has been supported by children’s social care and discussions with the parents, informing a contextual picture of the level of potential harm the child could be facing.”

Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep other people safe?

Professional discretion was applied to this area of practice as outlined above. In eight of the 11 cases, assessments identified and analysed any risk of harm to others posed by the child, including who was at risk and the nature of that risk. In all but one case, staff used available sources of information, including past behaviour and convictions, and involved other agencies, where appropriate, in the assessments. In four out of 11 cases, however, the assessment did not analyse controls and interventions to manage and minimise the risk of harm presented by the child.

Inspectors judged the case manager’s assessment of the level of risk of serious harm as reasonable in all but one case. Case managers analysed how to keep other people safe in seven out of 11 cases.

2.2. Planning



Planning is well-informed, holistic and personalised, actively involving the child and their parents or carers.	Requires improvement
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Our rating¹⁸ for planning is based on the following key questions:

	% ‘Yes’
Does planning focus sufficiently on supporting the child’s desistance?	91%
Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping the child safe?	73%
Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?	64%

Does planning focus on supporting the child’s desistance?

Overall, planning supported the child’s desistance in all but one of the cases inspected.

In 10 out of 11 cases, staff set out the services most likely to support desistance, paying attention to the available timescales and the need for sequencing. It took account of the child’s personal circumstances, including the wider familial and social context. Although planning considered the child’s strengths and protective factors in nine out of 11 cases, it did not address the child’s diversity issues in six out of 11 cases. Staff took account of the child’s level of maturity, ability and motivation to change in all but one case.

Planning did not give appropriate attention to the needs and wishes of the victim in three out of seven relevant cases, therefore missing opportunities for restorative practice. In 10 out of 11 cases, there was evidence that the child and their parents or carers had been involved in the planning, and their views taken into account.

¹⁸ The rating for the standard is driven by the lowest score on each of the key questions, which is placed in a rating band, indicated in bold in the table. See Annexe 2 for a more detailed explanation.

Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping the child safe?

In eight out of 11 cases, the risks to a child’s safety and wellbeing were addressed as part of the planning. Case managers involved other agencies and aligned their plans in all but one of the relevant cases. Planning adequately outlined the controls and interventions necessary to promote the child’s safety and wellbeing in seven of the relevant cases. However, contingency arrangements to manage identified risks were set out in only four of the 11 cases.

Overall, planning focused on keeping the child safe in eight of the 11 cases inspected.

One inspector noted:

“Given the complex nature of this case and the classification of high risk of potential harm, I would have expected to see a much more detailed multi agency plan to protect the child”.

Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?

There was sufficient planning to promote the safety of others in only seven of the 11 cases inspected. All cases involved other agencies, where appropriate. Planning to address any specific concerns and risks related to actual and potential victims was not evident in six of the nine relevant cases. This is disappointing, as case managers have access to the restorative justice unit and this information is available.

Planning set out the necessary controls and interventions to promote the safety of other people in only half of the cases inspected. Effective contingency arrangements to manage the risks that had been identified were not evident in seven out of the relevant 11 cases inspected. Planning to keep other people safe was the weakest area of practice across both post-court orders and out-of-court disposals.

One inspector noted:

“Insufficient attention was given to the risks to specific individuals and what may be needed to mitigate that risk. The contingency planning does not reference any need for monitoring or undertaking actions where risk is seen to increase”.

2.3. Implementation and delivery



High-quality, well-focused, personalised and coordinated services are delivered, engaging and assisting the child.

Outstanding

Our rating¹⁹ for implementation and delivery is based on the following key questions:

	% 'Yes'
Does the implementation and delivery of services effectively support the child’s desistance?	100%
Does the implementation and delivery of services effectively support the safety of the child?	91%
Does the implementation and delivery of services effectively support the safety of other people?	82%

¹⁹ The rating for the standard is driven by the lowest score on each of the key questions, which is placed in a rating band, indicated in bold in the table. See Annexe 2 for a more detailed explanation.

Does the implementation and delivery of services effectively support the child's desistance?

Overall, the delivery of services supported the child's desistance in all of the cases inspected. In all cases, the services delivered reflected the wider familial and social context of the child, involving the parents, carers or significant others, and in all but one case service delivery built on the child's strengths and protective factors. Service delivery took account of the child's diversity issues in only seven of the 11 cases.

In every case, it was clear that staff focused on developing and maintaining an effective working relationship with the child and their parents or carers. This reflects the comments made by inspectors that staff went 'over and above' the expectations of their role when working with children and families.

The following comment from an inspector demonstrates this:

"A significant amount of intervention work has taken place throughout this order, including attempts to support both parents with complex needs, in the hope that this provides stability for the child. Interventions are delivered in respect of the child's education and it is clear that the case manager has built a good, trusting relationship which supports desistance factors in a complex case".

In all but one case, opportunities to access services post-supervision had been promoted. Case managers had encouraged and enabled the child's compliance with the work of the YOT in every case. Enforcement actions were taken when appropriate and the interventions delivered were proportionate to the disposal and completed within the required timescales in all cases inspected.

Does the implementation and delivery of services effectively support the safety of the child?

The delivery of services to promote the child's safety and wellbeing was evident in eight of the 10 relevant cases, and the case manager had coordinated the involvement of other organisations in all but one of the relevant cases. Overall, the implementation and delivery of services supported the safety of the child effectively in 10 out of the 11 cases inspected.

One inspector noted:

"In order to keep the child safe, priority was given to the child's mental health and wellbeing through an early referral to CAMHS and joint work with the social worker. There was a well-coordinated multi-professional approach to jointly address the child's needs whilst supporting the safety of the child".

Does the implementation and delivery of services effectively support the safety of other people?

Services delivered to keep other people safe, by managing and minimising the risk of harm, were evident in nine of the 11 cases inspected. In all of the relevant cases, staff had coordinated the involvement of other agencies. Overall, the service delivery effectively supported the safety of other people, and this was evidenced in nine out of the 11 cases inspected. However, sufficient attention to the protection of actual and potential victims had only been given in a small number of cases (four of the nine relevant cases) and this is an area for development.

2.4. Reviewing



Reviewing of progress is well-informed, analytical and personalised, actively involving the child and their parents or carers.

Good

Our rating²⁰ for reviewing is based on the following key questions:

	% 'Yes'
Does reviewing focus sufficiently on supporting the child's desistance?	100%
Does reviewing focus sufficiently on keeping the child safe?	73%
Does reviewing focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?	64%

Does reviewing focus sufficiently on supporting the child's desistance?

Case managers are aware that children's circumstances can change rapidly, and that this can result in an increase, or sometimes decrease, in the likelihood of reoffending, risk of harm to others or risks to their safety and wellbeing.

Reviews resulted in the identification of, and a subsequent response to, changes in the factors linked to desistance in all of the cases inspected. They built on the child's strengths and considered the personal circumstances, including the wider familial and social context of the child in every case. The review included an analysis of, and a response to, the child's diversity factors in six of the nine relevant cases and considered their motivation and engagement levels in all cases. The child and their parents or carers had been involved meaningfully in the process, and their views taken into account, in all but one case.

In all cases, the review led to changes in the plan of work and, overall, every case inspected focused sufficiently on supporting the child's desistance.

One inspector noted:

"Regular reviews have been completed and a number of services informed the reviews including the YOT nurse, school, police and a restorative justice worker. Intervention actions were updated, and the child was praised for the good progress they were making, further supporting desistance".

Does reviewing focus sufficiently on keeping the child safe?

Case managers identified and responded to changes in a child's safety and wellbeing in eight out of 10 relevant cases. When reviewing, case managers had considered information from other agencies in all relevant cases, and the reviewing process had led to the necessary changes in the ongoing plan in seven of the 10 relevant cases. Overall, reviewing focused on keeping the child safe in eight out of 11 cases inspected.

This is demonstrated in the case below, where an inspector noted:

"Regular reviews took place involving parents and a number of services. Progress was noted and further barriers identified which needed to be addressed. There was evidence

²⁰ The rating for the standard is driven by the lowest score on each of the key questions, which is placed in a rating band, indicated in bold in the table. See Annexe 2 for a more detailed explanation.

that the case manager listened to the child's wishes and feelings and understood that trust needed to be built before the child would open up and be able to engage in some of the interventions to be delivered."

Does reviewing focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?

As referred to above, professional discretion was applied to this area of practice. The case manager had identified, and responded to, changes in risk in six of the nine relevant cases. Reviewing was informed by information gathered from other agencies in all relevant cases. In eight out of 10 relevant cases, the child and their parents or carers had been involved meaningfully in reviewing the risk of harm to others, and had their views considered. The reviewing process led to necessary adjustments in the ongoing plan of work to manage and minimise these risks in only five of the nine relevant cases. Overall, reviewing focused on keeping other people safe in seven of the 11 cases inspected.

3. Out-of-court disposals

We inspected 13 cases managed by the YOT that had received an out-of-court disposal. These consisted of five youth conditional cautions, six youth cautions and two community resolutions. We interviewed the case managers in 12 cases.

We examined the quality of assessment, planning, and implementation and delivery of services. Each of these elements was inspected in respect of work done to address desistance, keep the child safe and keep other people safe. The quality of the work undertaken for each factor needs to be above a specified threshold for each aspect of supervision to be rated as satisfactory.

We also inspected the quality of policy and provision in place for out-of-court disposals, using evidence from documents, meetings and interviews.

Assessment was satisfactory in most of the out-of-court cases assessed in the areas of desistance and a child's safety and wellbeing. Case managers considered the child's strengths and protective factors, and their level of maturity, and ability and motivation to change. Where a victim had been identified, their needs and wishes were taken into account, and the views of parents or carers were considered as part of the assessment. Although assessments of children's risk of harm to others were strong, they should be improved by identifying more clearly who is at risk and the nature of the risk.

Planning was a significant strength in the areas of desistance and safety and wellbeing. Case managers took account of the child's personal circumstances, their strengths and protective factors and their level of motivation to change. Planning set out the opportunities for community integration and access to mainstream services following completion of the out-of-court disposal work. Case managers considered the needs and wishes of victims and included the child and parents or carers in the planning process. Planning for the child's risk of harm to others was positive and, in most cases, involved other agencies where appropriate. However, setting out the contingency arrangements to manage the risks presented would improve this area of work.

Implementation and delivery of services were also particularly strong in all three areas of desistance, a child's safety and wellbeing and their risk of harm to others. Case managers identified the factors that were most likely to support the child's desistance. They took account of the child's diversity issues and involved parents, carers or significant others. They focused on developing and maintaining a good working relationship with children and families and encouraged and enabled the child's compliance with the work. Inspectors noted that staff used creative methods to help children participate in the interventions and exceeded the expectations of their role to meet the needs of the children and their families.

The YOT had a good process in place for out-of-court disposals, which included completion of the AssetPlus assessment and a panel to determine the outcomes. Following its involvement in a YJB Pathfinder project, the YOT has worked with another YOT to further develop its provision by introducing the DIVERT scheme. This is a deferred prosecution scheme that gives children the opportunity to engage with an intervention and then be diverted away from the criminal justice system. There has been joint work with the police and policies have been updated. A new joint decision-making panel has been introduced to decide between an out-of-court disposal and DIVERT. This new process had not been fully implemented at the time of the inspection and so inspectors could not judge whether the outcomes anticipated had been achieved.

Strengths:

- When carrying out an assessment, case managers considered the child's strengths and protective factors, and their level of maturity, ability and motivation to change.
- Where a victim had been identified, their needs and wishes were taken into account. The views of parents or carers were considered as part of the assessment and planning process.
- Planning was rated as a strength in the areas of desistance and safety and wellbeing. It set out the opportunities for community integration and access to mainstream services following completion of the out-of-court disposal work.
- Implementation and delivery of services were excellent in all three areas of desistance, a child's safety and wellbeing and their risk of harm to others.
- Staff used creative methods to help children participate in the interventions and exceeded the expectations of their role to meet the needs of the children and their families.
- The YOT has a deferred prosecution scheme that gives children the opportunity to engage with an intervention and then be diverted away from the criminal justice system.

Areas for improvement:

- Assessing a child's risk of harm to others needs clearer identification of who is at risk and the nature of the risk.
- Contingency planning needs to be evident so that the arrangements for managing a child's risk of harm to others is clear.

Work with children receiving out-of-court disposals will be more effective if it is well targeted, planned and implemented. In our inspections, we look at a sample of cases. In each of those cases, we inspect against four standards.

3.1. Assessment



Assessment is well-informed, analytical and personalised, actively involving the child and their parents or carers.

Good

Our rating²¹ for assessment is based on the following key questions:

	% 'Yes'
Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to support the child's desistance?	85%
Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep the child safe?	85%

²¹ The rating for the standard is driven by the lowest score on each of the key questions, which is placed in a rating band, indicated in bold in the table. See Annexe 2 for a more detailed explanation.

Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep other people safe?

77%

Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to support the child's desistance?

There was sufficient analysis of offending behaviour in all but one of the 13 cases. Case managers took account of the child's personal circumstances and used information from other agencies in 12 out of 13 cases. The case manager considered the child's strengths and protective factors in every case, although they did not appropriately analyse the child's diversity issues in six of the 13 cases.

Case managers had involved the child and their parents or carers in the assessment and taken their views into account in all cases. The child's level of maturity, ability and motivation to change were considered in 11 out of 13 cases. The needs and wishes of victims had been taken into account in nine of the 10 relevant cases.

The factors in out-of-court disposals that relate most to a child's offending are self-identity, lifestyle, substance misuse, learning and education, training and employment; and in 11 of the 13 cases the assessment analysed sufficiently how to address these factors and support desistance.

In one case, the inspector noted:

"A range of sources were used to inform the assessment, including information from children's social care, police and the family and consideration was given to any language barriers. The offence analysis was good and explored all factors contributing to the offence".

Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep the child safe?

In 10 of the 13 cases, the risk to the child's safety and wellbeing had been identified and analysed appropriately by the case manager. The assessment used sources of information, including other assessments, and involved other agencies where appropriate in 10 out of 13 cases.

Inspectors judged the case manager's assessment of the level of safety and wellbeing as reasonable in all but one case. Overall, the assessment was judged to have analysed sufficiently how to keep the child safe in 11 out of 13 of the inspected cases.

One inspector noted:

"There is recognition in the assessment of the loss the child has experienced in family relationships and the impact of the verbal and physical abuse they have experienced. The case manager considers concerns relating to possible exploitation and identifies the impact that all this is having on the child's emotional and mental health and wellbeing".

Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep other people safe?

In 10 out of 13 cases, the assessment identified and analysed the risk of harm to others, including who is at risk and the nature of the risk. Similarly, in the same number of cases the case manager had used available sources of information, including other assessments, to inform their own judgement. Inspectors judged the case manager's assessment of the level of risk of serious harm to others as reasonable in all but one case and, overall, the assessment sufficiently analysed how to keep other people safe in 10 out of 13 of the cases inspected.

3.2. Planning



Planning is well-informed, analytical and personalised, actively involving the child and their parents or carers.

Good

Our rating²² for planning is based on the following key questions:

	% 'Yes'
Does planning focus on supporting the child's desistance?	100%
Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping the child safe?	85%
Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?	69%

Does planning focus sufficiently on supporting the child's desistance?

Overall, planning supported the child's desistance sufficiently in every case inspected. In all cases, staff planned the services most likely to support desistance, paying attention to appropriate timescales and sequencing. In all 13 cases, staff took account of the child's wider familial and social context. However, in six out of 13 cases, planning did not address the child's diversity issues well enough. In 11 out of 13 cases, staff had taken account of the child's strengths and protective factors. The child's level of maturity and motivation to change were considered by the case manager in 12 out of 13 cases.

Case managers had taken account of opportunities for community integration and access to mainstream services for the child after completing their out-of-court disposal in all but two cases. Planning was proportionate to the disposal type, which meant that interventions could be completed within the timescales, in all cases.

In all cases, staff had involved the child and their parents or carers in the planning process, and in all but one of the relevant cases the needs and wishes of victims had been considered.

Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping the child safe?

In 11 out of the relevant 13 cases, planning promoted the safety and wellbeing of the child, and in all but two relevant cases information from other agencies was included. Contingency arrangements for any changes to the level of risk were not evident in seven out of 13 cases but, overall, planning focused on keeping the child safe in 11 out of 13 cases inspected.

This was demonstrated in the case below, where an inspector noted:

"The planning meeting evidences consideration of the child's sense of belonging, acceptance, emotional regulation, sexual and general health. There is a detailed plan to support them to access counselling and sessions on understanding healthy relationships as well as awareness of exploitation".

Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?

Overall, planning that focused on keeping people safe was evident in nine of the 13 cases inspected. Planning to promote the safety of others by addressing the factors related to

²² The rating for the standard is driven by the lowest score on each of the key questions, which is placed in a rating band, indicated in bold in the table. See Annexe 2 for a more detailed explanation.

the risk of harm to others was evident in all but three relevant cases but planning for contingency arrangements to manage those risks was not identified in seven out of 12 relevant cases.

One inspector noted:

“When discussing the safety of others, the plan lacked focus as to who is going to deliver critical work, why and when, and the contingency planning lacked sufficient detail”.

Case managers involved other agencies in seven out of 10 relevant cases and planning to address concerns related to actual and potential victims was evident in seven out of the 11 relevant cases inspected.

3.3. Implementation and delivery



High-quality, well-focused, personalised and coordinated services are delivered, engaging and assisting the child.

Outstanding

Our rating²³ for implementation and delivery is based on the following key questions:

	% 'Yes'
Does service delivery effectively support the child's desistance?	100%
Does service delivery effectively support the safety of the child?	92%
Does service delivery effectively support the safety of other people?	85%

Does service delivery focus sufficiently on supporting the child's desistance?

Overall, support for the child's desistance was evident in all of the 13 cases inspected. Interventions to support desistance had been delivered in good time in every case. The case manager had accounted for any diversity issues in all but three cases and had considered the child's social context, involving parents or carers in all of the cases.

The delivery of the interventions promoted opportunities for community integration and access to mainstream services in all but one case. Case managers developed and maintained an effective working relationship with the child and their parents or carers. They encouraged and enabled the child's compliance in every case. Similar to court orders, inspectors noted that staff used creative methods to help children participate in the interventions and exceeded the expectations of their role to meet the needs of the children and their families.

One inspector noted:

“There was evidence that the child did not want to be labelled and was reluctant to talk about the details of the offence. This was managed well by the case manager, who took a strengths-based approach and focused on the positives”.

Does service delivery focus sufficiently on keeping the child safe?

Promoting the safety and wellbeing of the child through service delivery was evident in all but one of the relevant cases, and case managers involved other agencies in keeping

²³ The rating for the standard is driven by the lowest score on each of the key questions, which is placed in a rating band, indicated in bold in the table. See Annexe 2 for a more detailed explanation.

children safe in nine out of 10 of the cases. Overall, service delivery supported the safety of the child in all but one of the cases inspected.

One inspector noted:

“The case manager has linked well with children’s social services and the child’s family in order to monitor any ongoing gang-related activity, developing relationships in order to gain knowledge of the child’s activities and experiences”.

Does service delivery focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?

For keeping other people safe, case managers had considered the protection of actual and potential victims in nine out of the 11 relevant cases.

This was evidenced in one case, where the inspector noted:

“Discussions were held with the victim and victim’s family about the proposed outcome for the child. There was also a targeted piece of work to address the impact on the victim as well as the wider community”.

The services delivered, managed and minimised the risk of harm in all but one of the relevant cases, and, overall, inspectors judged that the safety of other people was sufficiently supported in 11 out of the 13 cases inspected.

3.4. Out-of-court disposal policy and provision



There is a high-quality, evidence-based out-of-court disposal service in place that promotes diversion and supports sustainable desistance.

Good

In making a judgement about out-of-court disposal policy and provision, we take into account the answers to the following questions:

Is there a policy in place for out-of-court provision that promotes appropriate diversion and supports sustainable desistance?

There is a Wolverhampton out-of-court disposal policy, which is agreed between West Midlands Police and the YOT. This was updated in March 2021 to include the arrangements for the new DIVERT processes that were to be introduced from September 2021.

There is also a joint working agreement which outlines the provision for a joint decision-making panel that offers two alternative routes rather than a referral to court. One of these is a formal out-of-court disposal; the other route, which avoids a criminal record, is the DIVERT pathway using Outcome 22. This means prosecution is deferred until the child has been given the opportunity to engage with an intervention, diverting the child away from the youth justice system.

Does out-of-court disposal provision promote diversion and support sustainable desistance?

When a child is referred to the YOT by the police, the YOT screens partners’ databases, including children’s social care. Where a victim has consented to involvement, a member of the restorative justice unit makes contact with them. The case is allocated to a YOT

worker to complete an AssetPlus assessment. Every child is referred to the YOT health worker, who assesses their health needs.

The YOT had an out-of-court decision-making panel in place, which offered out-of-court disposals, including community resolution, youth caution and youth conditional caution. However, since September 2021, the YOT has introduced a DIVERT pathway, which means that some children can receive a police Outcome 22. As a result of the implementation of DIVERT, a new joint decision-making panel has been introduced to determine whether the child should receive DIVERT or an out-of-court disposal. The joint decision-making panel includes representatives from early help, liaison and diversion, the restorative justice unit and education services. Other practitioners, such as children's social care, attend as necessary.

There is no fixed number of out-of-court disposals that a child can receive. The decision depends on the type of offence, acceptance of responsibility or agreement to a voluntary intervention, what is right for the community and what will meet the child's needs. The YOT worker presents the assessment to the panel. If there are any disagreements on the appropriate outcome, this is escalated to the service manager and relevant police sergeant.

It is expected that an out-of-court disposal will be completed within three months, although an additional three months can be added with management approval where there is a need. If a child does not comply with their disposal, case managers make efforts to support their engagement. Where risks are identified, the YOT will refer the case to other services, including the Multi-agency Safeguarding Hub and the Partnership Exploitation Hub.

YOT staff carry out exit interviews to support learning and provide feedback to police. Provision for out-of-court disposals before the introduction of DIVERT was good and it is agreed that the new process will offer children more opportunities avoid becoming criminalised unnecessarily. At the time of the inspection, however, this process had not been fully implemented and so inspectors could not determine whether these outcomes had been achieved.

Are the out-of-court disposal policy and provision regularly assessed and updated to ensure effectiveness and maintain alignment with the evidence base?

The out-of-court disposal process was reviewed and has been changed to include DIVERT and the deferred prosecution option of Outcome 22. This offers children an opportunity to engage with an intervention even if they have not admitted responsibility for the offence. The evidential test has to be applied to ensure that children who would not have been charged due to lack of evidence are not being included.

The YOT policy refers to the need for DIVERT in order to ensure that children are not being unnecessarily criminalised. It also refers to the Lammy review²⁴ and the scheme aims to ensure black, Asian and minority ethnic children are offered the opportunity to be diverted away from the criminal justice system.

The performance and analysis of out-of-court disposals are included in the performance report to the management board.

²⁴ Ministry of Justice. (2016). Lammy Review of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) representation in the Criminal Justice System.

4. Resettlement

4.1. Resettlement policy and provision



There is a high-quality, evidence-based resettlement service for children leaving custody.

Outstanding

We inspected the quality of policy and provision in place for resettlement work, using evidence from documents, meetings and interviews. To illustrate that work, we inspected one case managed by the YOT that had received a custodial sentence. Our key findings were as follows.

Strengths:

- The YOT has resettlement panels that are well established and considered effective by staff and managers.
- There is a commitment to these panels from partners to support effective joint working.
- YOT staff have taken parents, carers and siblings to visits and facilitated video and telephone calls so that families can stay in touch.
- The management board has a designated member with oversight of the secure estate.
- There is a local arrangement with children's social care to ensure that all children are released to suitable accommodation.

Areas for improvement

- There had been no specific training for staff managing resettlement cases.

We gathered evidence for this standard from documents and meetings and inspected one case to allow us to illustrate the qualitative standards. In making a judgement about resettlement policy and provision, we take into account the answers to the following three questions:

Is there a resettlement policy in place that promotes a high-quality, constructive and personalised resettlement service for all children?

The YOT has a resettlement policy in place, dated 2019, which introduced resettlement panels. These panels are well established and are considered effective by staff and managers. They are held every six weeks and chaired by a YOT operational manager or the service manager. An example was given where the panel was able to address a child's accommodation needs at an early stage in their sentence and this resulted in accommodation being secured before the child's release. There is also a commitment to resettlement panels from partners to support effective joint working.

YOT staff described communication with the secure estate as very good. Each child is allocated a resettlement worker and there are weekly conversations between the YOT and the establishment. Information exchange with the secure establishment is timely, and any adjudication outcomes are usually received within 24 hours.

During Covid-19, most children have been kept in bubbles and those children who are most vulnerable have struggled with less time out of their cells. Direct work has also been limited and so YOT workers have been attending establishments to deliver interventions. Where possible, and when restrictions were lifted, YOT workers attended establishments with partner agencies. YOT staff have also taken parents, carers and siblings to visits and facilitated video and telephone calls so that families can stay in touch.

The management board has a designated member with oversight of the secure estate. They are routinely invited to the YOT resettlement panels. The HMYOI Werrington Resettlement Manager also attends the panels.

There is a process in place for escalating concerns about issues in the secure estate. In the first instance, the YOT operations manager and the secure estate resettlement manager will attempt to resolve the matter. If this does not resolve the issue, then there is the option to escalate to the YOT team leader.

Does resettlement provision promote a high-quality, constructive and personalised resettlement service for all children?

Finding accommodation for children leaving custodial establishments can be particularly difficult, as it is difficult to source timely, good-quality placements with appropriate support. The YOT has a local arrangement with children's social care to ensure that all children are released to suitable accommodation. If a child is a child in care or has leaving care status when in custody, then a member of the Children and Young People in Care Team is invited to the resettlement support panels so that they remain up to date with the circumstances of the child in custody and their needs on release.

The YOT had one resettlement case in the inspection. In this case, discussions and planning around accommodation started at the beginning of the sentence and indicated that the family's circumstances would be monitored to ensure that the child was released to appropriate provision. Planning and provision for ETE and health were not needed at that stage of the child's sentence.

The case showed that initial contact was made with the child in custody and their family within appropriate timescales following the custodial sentence. However, due to Covid-19, contact between YOT case manager and the child was initially hampered. The case manager wrote to the child and kept in touch with key workers at the establishment. Once restrictions were lifted, face-to-face contact took place approximately monthly, followed up by telephone calls. The case manager helped with virtual visits for the family and formal planning meetings were attended by the YOT and the child's family, as well as key professionals from the establishment. The case manager considered approaching the restorative justice unit to provide some family mediation work.

The case showed evidence of escalation as the case manager raised concerns about the child's safeguarding and the lack of access to meaningful interventions. These concerns were raised with the YOI Head of Safeguarding and the Wolverhampton safeguarding lead. Key senior managers sent them formally to the YOI and the relevant safeguarding partnership in the area. The response highlighted the safeguarding measures in place and the interventions that would be provided. This was recorded by the resettlement support panels chaired by the service manager.

There is evidence in the resettlement case that appropriate information was shared between the custodial establishment and the YOT case manager and vice versa. There was also a good level of contact between the YOT case manager, the child and their family.

At the time of the inspection there had been no specific training for resettlement work, although staff felt that trauma-informed practice training was especially relevant to resettlement cases.

Are resettlement policy and provision regularly assessed and updated to ensure effectiveness and maintain alignment with the evidence base?

The YOT resettlement policy and guidance were reviewed and updated for 2021-2022. Initially, resettlement support panels were being convened monthly, but following a review of the process with secure estate colleagues, it was reduced to bi-monthly, although this depends on the child's circumstances.

In addition to resettlement support panels, the review developed a risk review process. The risk review indicates the primary risk factors for the child in custody and in the community, and also collates the views of the child, their carers, community and custody case managers and other professionals working with the child.

Annexe 1: Methodology

HM Inspectorate of Probation standards

The standards against which we inspect youth offending services are based on established models and frameworks, which are grounded in evidence, learning and experience. These standards are designed to drive improvements in the quality of work with children who have offended.²⁵

The inspection methodology is summarised below, linked to the three domains in our standards framework. We focused on obtaining evidence against the standards, key questions and prompts in our inspection framework.

Domain one: organisational delivery

The youth offending service submitted evidence in advance and the Executive Director of Families delivered a presentation covering the following areas:

- How do organisational delivery arrangements in this area make sure that the work of your YOS is as effective as it can be, and that the life chances of children who have offended are improved?
- What are your priorities for further improving these arrangements?

During the main fieldwork phase, we conducted 23 interviews with case managers, asking them about their experiences of training, development, management supervision and leadership. We held various meetings, which allowed us to triangulate evidence and information. In total, we conducted 12 meetings, which included meetings with managers, partner organisations and staff. The evidence collected under this domain was judged against our published ratings characteristics.²⁶

Domain two: court disposals

We completed case assessments over a one-week period, examining case files and interviewing case managers. Forty per cent of the cases selected were those of children who had received court disposals six to nine months earlier, enabling us to examine work in relation to assessing, planning, implementing and reviewing. Where necessary, interviews with other people significantly involved in the case also took place.

We examined 11 court disposals. The sample size was set to achieve a confidence level of 80 per cent (with a margin of error of five), and we ensured that the ratios in relation to gender, sentence or disposal type, risk of serious harm, and risk to safety and wellbeing classifications matched those in the eligible population.

Domain three: out-of-court disposals

We completed case assessments over a one-week period, examining case files and interviewing case managers. Sixty per cent of cases selected were those of children who had received out-of-court disposals three to five months earlier. This enabled us to

²⁵ HM Inspectorate's standards are available here:
<https://www.justiceinspectors.gov.uk/hmiprobation/about-our-work/our-standards-and-ratings/>

examine work in relation to assessing, planning, and implementation and delivery. Where necessary, interviews with other people significantly involved in the case also took place.

We examined 13 out-of-court disposals. The sample size was set based on the proportion of out-of-court disposal cases in the YOT.

Resettlement

We completed case assessments over a one-week period, examining one case file and interviewing the case manager in the case where the child had received a custodial sentence or been released from custodial sentences four to 12 months earlier. This enabled us to gather information to illustrate the impact of resettlement policy and provision on service delivery. Where necessary, interviews with other people significantly involved in the case also took place.

In some areas of this report, data may have been split into smaller sub-samples – for example, male/female cases. Where this is the case, the margin of error for the sub-sample findings may be higher than five.

Annexe 2: Inspection data

In this inspection, we conducted a detailed examination of a sample 11 court disposals and 13 out-of-court disposals. In each of those cases, we inspect against standards regarding assessment, planning and implementation/delivery. For court disposals, we also look at reviewing. For each standard, inspectors answer a number of key questions about different aspects of quality, including whether there was sufficient analysis of the factors related to offending; the extent to which young offenders were involved in assessment and planning; and whether enough was done to assess the level of risk of harm posed, and to manage that risk. We reviewed a further one case to obtain data to illustrate our findings about resettlement policy and provision.

To score an 'Outstanding' rating for the sections on court disposals or out-of-court disposals, 80 per cent or more of the cases we analyse have to be assessed as sufficient. If between 65 per cent and 79 per cent are judged to be sufficient, then the rating is 'Good' and if between 50 per cent and 64 per cent are judged to be sufficient, then a rating of 'Requires improvement' is applied. Finally, if less than 50 per cent are sufficient, then we rate this as 'Inadequate'. Resettlement cases are not separately rated; the data is for illustrative purposes only.

The rating at the standard level is aligned to the lowest banding at the key question level, recognising that each key question is an integral part of the standard. Therefore, if we rate three key questions as 'Good' and one as 'Inadequate', the overall rating for that standard is 'Inadequate'.

Lowest banding (key question level)	Rating (standard)
Minority: <50%	Inadequate
Too few: 50-64%	Requires improvement
Reasonable majority: 65-79%	Good
Large majority: 80%+	Outstanding ☆

Additional scoring rules are used to generate the overall YOT rating. Each of the 12 standards are scored on a 0–3 scale in which 'Inadequate' = 0; 'Requires improvement' = 1; 'Good' = 2; and 'Outstanding' = 3. Adding these scores produces a total score ranging from 0 to 36, which is banded to produce the overall rating, as follows:

- 0–6 = Inadequate
- 7–18 = Requires improvement
- 19–30 = Good
- 31–36 = Outstanding.

Domain one standards, the qualitative standard in domain three (standard 3.4) and the resettlement standard (standard 4.1) are judged using predominantly qualitative evidence.

The resettlement standard is rated separately and does not influence the overall YOT rating. We apply a limiting judgement, whereby any YOT that receives an 'Inadequate' rating for the resettlement standard is unable to receive an overall 'Outstanding' rating, regardless of how they are rated against the core standards. Where there are no relevant resettlement cases, we do not apply a rating to resettlement work.

Data from inspected cases:²⁷

2.1. Assessment (court disposals)	
Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to support the child's desistance?	% yes
a) Is there sufficient analysis of offending behaviour, including the child's attitudes towards and motivations for their offending?	64%
b) Does assessment sufficiently analyse diversity issues?	64%
c) Does assessment consider personal circumstances, including the wider familial and social context of the child?	100%
d) Does assessment utilise information held by other agencies?	100%
e) Does assessment focus on the child's strengths and protective factors?	91%
f) Does assessment analyse the key structural barriers facing the child?	73%
g) Is enough attention given to understanding the child's levels of maturity, ability and motivation to change, and their likelihood of engaging with the court disposal?	91%
h) Does assessment give sufficient attention to the needs and wishes of victims, and opportunities for restorative justice?	55%
i) Are the child and their parents or carers meaningfully involved in their assessment, and are their views taken into account?	91%
Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep the child safe?	% yes
a) Does assessment clearly identify and analyse any risks to the safety and wellbeing of the child?	64%
b) Does assessment draw sufficiently on available sources of information, including other assessments, and involve other agencies where appropriate?	82%
c) Does assessment analyse controls and interventions to promote the safety and wellbeing of the child?	73%
Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep other people safe?	% yes
a) Does assessment clearly identify and analyse any risk of harm to others posed by the child, including identifying who is at risk and the nature of that risk?	73%

²⁷ Some questions do not apply in all cases.

b) Does assessment draw sufficiently on available sources of information, including past behaviour and convictions, and involve other agencies where appropriate?	91%
c) Does assessment analyse controls and interventions to manage and minimise the risk of harm presented by the child?	64%

2.2. Planning (court disposals)

Does planning focus sufficiently on supporting the child's desistance?	% yes
a) Does planning set out the services most likely to support desistance, paying sufficient attention to the available timescales and the need for sequencing?	91%
b) Does planning sufficiently address diversity issues?	45%
c) Does planning take sufficient account of the child's personal circumstances, including the wider familial and social context of the child?	82%
d) Does planning take sufficient account of the child's strengths and protective factors, and seek to reinforce or develop these as necessary?	82%
e) Does planning take sufficient account of the child's levels of maturity, ability and motivation to change, and seek to develop these as necessary?	91%
f) Does planning give sufficient attention to the needs and wishes of victims?	36%
g) Are the child and their parents or carers meaningfully involved in planning, and are their views taken into account?	91%
Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping the child safe?	% yes
a) Does planning promote the safety and wellbeing of the child, sufficiently addressing risks?	73%
b) Does planning involve other agencies where appropriate, and is there sufficient alignment with other plans (e.g. child protection or care plans) concerning the child?	82%
c) Does planning set out the necessary controls and interventions to promote the safety and wellbeing of the child?	64%
d) Does planning set out necessary and effective contingency arrangements to manage those risks that have been identified?	36%
Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?	% yes
a) Does planning promote the safety of other people, sufficiently addressing risk of harm factors?	73%

b) Does planning involve other agencies where appropriate?	91%
c) Does planning address any specific concerns and risks related to actual and potential victims?	27%
d) Does planning set out the necessary controls and interventions to promote the safety of other people?	45%
e) Does planning set out necessary and effective contingency arrangements to manage those risks that have been identified?	36%

2.3. Implementation and delivery (court disposals)

Does the implementation and delivery of services effectively support the child's desistance?	% yes
a) Are the delivered services those most likely to support desistance, with sufficient attention given to sequencing and the available timescales?	100%
b) Does service delivery account for the diversity issues of the child?	64%
c) Does service delivery reflect the wider familial and social context of the child, involving parents or carers, or significant others?	100%
d) Does service delivery build upon the child's strengths and enhance protective factors?	91%
e) Is sufficient focus given to developing and maintaining an effective working relationship with the child and their parents or carers?	100%
f) Does service delivery promote opportunities for community integration, including access to services post-supervision?	91%
g) Is sufficient attention given to encouraging and enabling the child's compliance with the work of the YOT?	100%
h) Are enforcement actions taken when appropriate?	45%
Does the implementation and delivery of services effectively support the safety of the child?	% yes
a) Does service delivery promote the safety and wellbeing of the child?	73%
b) Is the involvement of other organisations in keeping the child safe sufficiently well-coordinated?	73%
Does the implementation and delivery of services effectively support the safety of other people?	% yes
a) Are the delivered services sufficient to manage and minimise the risk of harm?	82%

b) Is sufficient attention given to the protection of actual and potential victims?	36%
c) Is the involvement of other agencies in managing the risk of harm sufficiently well-coordinated?	73%

2. 4. Reviewing (court disposals)

Does reviewing focus sufficiently on supporting the child's desistance?	% yes
a) Does reviewing identify and respond to changes in factors linked to desistance?	100%
b) Does reviewing focus sufficiently on building upon the child's strengths and enhancing protective factors?	100%
c) Does reviewing include analysis of, and respond to, diversity factors?	55%
d) Does reviewing consider the personal circumstances, including the wider familial and social context of the child?	100%
d) Does reviewing consider motivation and engagement levels and any relevant barriers?	100%
e) Are the child and their parents or carers meaningfully involved in reviewing their progress and engagement, and are their views taken into account?	91%
f) Does reviewing lead to the necessary adjustments in the ongoing plan of work to support desistance?	100%
Does reviewing focus sufficiently on keeping the child safe?	% yes
a) Does reviewing identify and respond to changes in factors related to safety and wellbeing?	73%
b) Is reviewing informed by the necessary input from other agencies involved in promoting the safety and wellbeing of the child?	73%
c) Does reviewing lead to the necessary adjustments in the ongoing plan of work to promote the safety and wellbeing of the child?	64%
Does reviewing focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?	% yes
a) Does reviewing identify and respond to changes in factors related to risk of harm?	55%
b) Is reviewing informed by the necessary input from other agencies involved in managing the risk of harm?	64%

c) Does reviewing lead to the necessary adjustments in the ongoing plan all of work to manage and minimise the risk of harm?	45%
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3.1. Assessment (out-of-court disposals)

Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to support the child's desistance?	% yes
a) Is there sufficient analysis of offending behaviour, including the child's acknowledgement of responsibility for, attitudes towards and motivations for their offending?	92%
b) Does assessment sufficiently analyse diversity issues?	54%
c) Does assessment consider personal circumstances, including the wider familial and social context of the child?	92%
d) Does assessment utilise information held by other agencies?	92%
e) Does assessment focus on the child's strengths and protective factors?	100%
f) Does assessment analyse the key structural barriers facing the child?	54%
g) Is sufficient attention given to understanding the child's levels of maturity, ability and motivation to change?	85%
h) Does assessment give sufficient attention to the needs and wishes of victims, and opportunities for restorative justice?	69%
i) Are the child and their parents or carers meaningfully involved in their assessment, and are their views taken into account?	100%
Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep the child safe?	% yes
a) Does assessment clearly identify and analyse any risks to the safety and wellbeing of the child?	77%
b) Does assessment draw sufficiently on available sources of information, including other assessments, and involve other agencies where appropriate?	77%
Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep other people safe?	% yes
a) Does assessment clearly identify and analyse any risk of harm to others posed by the child, including identifying who is at risk and the nature of that risk?	77%
b) Does assessment draw sufficiently on available sources of information, including any other assessments that have been completed, and other evidence of behaviour by the child?	77%

3.2. Planning (out-of-court disposals)	
Does planning focus on supporting the child's desistance?	% yes
a) Does planning set out the services most likely to support desistance, paying sufficient attention to the available timescales and the need for sequencing?	100%
b) Does planning sufficiently address diversity issues?	54%
c) Does planning take sufficient account of the child's personal circumstances, including the wider familial and social context of the child?	100%
d) Does planning take sufficient account of the child's strengths and protective factors, and seek to reinforce or develop these as necessary?	85%
e) Does planning take sufficient account of the child's levels of maturity, ability and motivation to change, and seek to develop these as necessary?	92%
f) Does planning take sufficient account of opportunities for community integration, including access to mainstream services following completion of out-of-court disposal work?	85%
g) Does planning give sufficient attention to the needs and wishes of the victims?	62%
h) Are the child and their parents or carers meaningfully involved in planning, and are their views taken into account?	100%
Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping the child safe?	% yes
a) Does planning promote the safety and wellbeing of the child, sufficiently addressing risks?	85%
b) Does planning involve other agencies where appropriate, and is there sufficient alignment with other plans (e.g. child protection or care plans) concerning the child?	69%
c) Does planning include necessary contingency arrangements for those risks that have been identified?	46%
Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?	% yes
a) Does planning promote the safety of other people, sufficiently addressing risk of harm factors?	69%
b) Does planning involve other agencies where appropriate?	54%
c) Does planning address any specific concerns and risks related to actual and potential victims?	54%
d) Does planning include necessary contingency arrangements for those risks that have been identified?	38%

3.3. Implementation and delivery (out-of-court disposals)	
Does service delivery effectively support the child's desistance?	% yes
a) Are the delivered services those most likely to support desistance, with sufficient attention given to sequencing and the available timescales?	100%
b) Does service delivery account for the diversity issues of the child?	77%
c) Does service delivery reflect the wider familial and social context of the child, involving parents or carers, or significant others?	100%
d) Is sufficient focus given to developing and maintaining an effective working relationship with the child and their parents or carers?	100%
e) Is sufficient attention given to encouraging and enabling the child's compliance with the work of the YOT?	100%
f) Does service delivery promote opportunities for community integration, including access to mainstream services?	92%
Does service delivery effectively support the safety of the child?	% yes
a) Does service delivery promote the safety and wellbeing of the child?	92%
b) Is the involvement of other agencies in keeping the child safe sufficiently well utilised and coordinated?	69%
Does service delivery effectively support the safety of other people?	% yes
a) Are the delivered services sufficient to manage and minimise the risk of harm?	83%
b) Is sufficient attention given to the protection of actual and potential victims?	69%